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Update on the context and situation of children

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Botswana's economic growth was expected to decline to 3.9 per cent in 2019 and remain within the range of 3.9 to 4.2 per cent until 2022, due to weak performance of the global market for rough diamonds. Government projections in the National Development Plan (NDP) 11 Mid-Term Review (MTR) Macro-Economic Outline show a similar pattern of growth. The poverty rate (16.3 per cent in 2015/16) remains high for an upper-middle income country. Many people live just above the poverty line and are at risk of falling into poverty. Inequality is also very high, with a Gini coefficient of 60.5 – the third highest in the world, according to the 2018 Human Development Report. Botswana has experienced a 43.4 per cent loss in potential human development due to gender inequality.

Despite its strong economic performance, the Botswana economy has been unable to create sufficient formal employment for its growing population. Unemployment (17.6 per cent) is a major concern, especially amongst youth. According to Statistics Botswana, in 2015/16, the most affected age groups among those actively seeking work were those aged 18-19 and 20-24, recording unemployment rates of 48.1 and 37.3 per cent respectively. Even amongst the employed many people are in low-paid occupations.

Botswana is experiencing a period of fiscal transition, as the diamond industry matures, with no significant growth expected in Southern Africa Customs Union (SACU) revenues. The revised fiscal projections for the second half of NDP 11 (2020/21-2022/23) show a significant decline in anticipated revenues (as a share of Gross Domestic Product), reflecting lower diamond and SACU revenues. There are also short-term shocks, as in 2019, due to a weak international diamond market. Past savings have already been depleted to some extent due to recent budget deficits. According to the 2019/20 budget, a deficit of P7.34 billion is expected. This situation resulted in intense competition for resources as Ministries submitted their 2020/21 budgets.

In the 2019/20 fiscal year, Botswana continued to prioritise public investments in children with over one-third of fiscal spending devoted to child-focused priority areas (health, primary and secondary education, and social assistance). Education took the largest share (22 per cent), while the share of spending allocated to health increased to 12 per cent. Despite the high levels of spending on social and economic infrastructure, there are significant concerns about the quality of service provision in Botswana.

In the political sphere, the Botswana Democratic Party, which has ruled since Independence, won 38 of 57 seats in Parliament, leading to H.E. Mokgweetsi Masisi being re-inaugurated as President of the Republic. Very few incumbents returned to Parliament and the Cabinet, and new Ministers have been appointed in every Ministry with which UNICEF collaborates. President Masisi has pledged to address corruption and to focus on creating a diversified economy that can provide jobs for youth. In addition, President Masisi specifically mentioned the need for improved education and reduced violence against children and women in his inauguration speech.

The intense focus on the election meant that some activities were delayed in 2019 because government resources were needed to ensure a smooth electoral process and Cabinet officials were focused on campaigning in addition to their ministerial responsibilities. The Botswana AIDS Impact Survey was delayed and a few meetings, as well as campaign and dissemination activities were postponed to 2020. Fieldwork for research was delayed due to unavailability of Government counterparts. UNICEF also noted a significant decrease in media coverage on children's issues as compared to last year, likely because of the election dominating media space.

HIV prevalence among young people (15-24 years) is estimated at 7.9 per cent. Adolescent girls aged 15-19 are twice as likely to be infected with HIV as boys of the same age. Malnutrition rates among children under-5 are high with preliminary new data suggesting that rates may still be upwards of 20 per cent. Diarrhoea and pneumonia are leading causes of death among children under-5, with 70 per cent of all institutional deaths occurring in the first 28 days of life. The Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis of 2015/2016 data showed that 50.3 per cent of children live in multi-dimensional poverty. Minimal improvement in pass rates at primary school are overshadowed by over 65 and 70 per cent of junior and senior secondary school students failing exams, respectively. The 2016 Violence Against Children survey indicates that physical violence is the most common form of violence. Prevalence of sexual violence prior to age 18 was 9.3 per cent for females and 5.5 per cent for males.

The Government-led and UNICEF-supported National Campaign on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) of Children under the slogan "E Seng Mo Ngwaneng", meaning 'hands off our children' continued in full force throughout 2019. Several companies contributed to the campaign, with members of the CEO Council for Children's Rights organizing specific events for their staff on prevention of SEA.

A new campaign on early childhood development (ECD), called Early Moments Matter, was launched with the Ministries of

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Basic Education, Health and Wellness, and Local Government and Rural Development, at which the Vice-President pledged to increase government funding for ECD. A seminar on World Class Family Policies for Corporates resulted in a private university introducing four weeks of paternity leave. Other companies are setting up a lactation room and a “baby lounge” for emergency childcare. At the district level, the Government ran Child Health Days and facilitated parenting workshops, among other activities.

Online engagement with adolescents and young people increased significantly in 2019, not least as a result of the two campaigns undertaken. Facebook followers increased from 14,190 in 2018 to 17,949 in 2019 while Twitter followers grew from 4,143 to 6,125. Social media messages included statements from influential figures in society and the voices of victims of sexual abuse.

Following intense advocacy by UNICEF and other partners, the Government of Botswana moved all refugees, including children, out of the Francistown Center for Illegal Immigrants and deported 700 Namibians back to their home country.

Major contributions and drivers of results

UNICEF Botswana’s Country Programme is centred around two core pillars: Child Poverty and Adolescents and HIV/AIDS.

MOHW piloted the Nutrition Information System (NIS), which was developed and tested in 2018, in two districts in 2019. The system, which forms part of the DHIS2 Platform, enables monitoring and case management of malnutrition as well as timely detection of acute malnutrition. Severe Acute Malnutrition performance indicators are also tracked through monitoring the nutritional status of children at the point of care. The University of Oslo, commissioned to develop, test and pilot the system, developed the capacity of 25 NIS core team members from the MOHW as well as UNICEF. To enhance integration, the NIS has been expanded further to cover core indicators in child health (the Expanded Programme on Immunization, Integrated Management of Childhood Illness and ECD), Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission, eye health and Sexual Reproductive Health. The system is ready for phase 2 testing and rollout to all 27 districts in 2020 and 2021.

In 2019 the Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition (IMAM) Guidelines were finalised and the IMAM implementation plan was developed. The NIS now includes priority IMAM process and quality assurance indicators to enhance nutrition surveillance. In 2020, UNICEF will support the costing and roll-out of the IMAM guidelines, also strengthening supply chain management for nutrition commodities.

An evaluation of the decades-old Vulnerable Group Feeding Programme (VGFP) was a significant undertaking in 2019. The evaluation, requested by the Government of Botswana, was critical in assessing the relevance, utilization, effectiveness and efficiency of the feeding programme. The evaluation identified several issues but most stark among them was that the VGFP products were only reaching a small percentage of intended recipients (children under-5). The evaluation recommends a phased approach towards a more targeted intervention and called for development of a nutrition-sensitive programme that is appropriate for malnutrition. As part of the evaluation exercise, an investment case for nutrition was commissioned to create a convincing argument for how stunting can be reduced in an economically feasible manner.

A light review of the Government’s newborn health programme was undertaken to better understand the increase in infant and neonatal mortality in Botswana. The review undertaken by UNICEF recommended key focus areas for implementation in 2020. They include capacity development of critical health staff on new-born health, specifically Kangaroo Mother Care, and institutionalization of the Perinatal Death Audits (PDSR). The support will contribute to enhanced coordination between the various departments in the MOHW, specifically those of child health, sexual and reproductive health, health promotion and nutrition. It is expected that improved collaboration and coordination will ultimately help to improve quality maternal neonatal and child care.

Innovative approaches, including technology for development, took centre stage for delivering HIV prevention, treatment and care interventions in 2019, demonstrating the importance of utilizing new platforms to scale up engagement with adolescents and young people in matters of concern to them. The Shuga radio serial drama, designed to encourage young people to make healthy relationship and sexual behaviour choices, and which reached 145,000 young people, incorporated a new mobile telephone platform that enabled

an estimated 38,500 additional young people to listen to the programme at a time convenient to them.

An HIV Testing Poll was launched by the First Lady of Botswana at World AIDS Day 2019. She did so while visiting the Youth Digital Village where UNICEF’s U-Report stall was one of the exhibitors. The digital village was a means for ICT-focused youth service organisations to engage young people, a testament to the strengthened digitalization and innovation of the national HIV and AIDS response and UNICEF’s leadership in this space. UNICEF was able to demonstrate the value

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addition of U-Report, create awareness, enrol additional U-Reporters and generate support from the highest office for national scale up. Results from two polls conducted in 2019 on inter-generational relationships and HIV testing, with a response rate of 90 per cent, have demonstrated that work on real time data and innovation is critical and should be strengthened and scaled up for the delivery of information, monitoring of programmes, strengthening citizen engagement and for providing a platform for young people to amplify their voices. U-Report will officially be launched in 2020.

UNICEF and the World Bank undertook a Basic Education Public Expenditure Review (PER), at the request of MOBE and Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. The objective of the exercise was to assess the adequacy, equity and sustainability of public education spending. It is expected that the PER findings will influence future programme and budget decisions. In 2020, UNICEF expects to support the Government in the development of an action plan to implement the PER recommendations.

Testing of 'Teaching at the Right Level' (TARL), an innovative and alternative approach to remediation in primary schools, continued in 50 primary schools reaching 5,500 learners across 3 regions. This was done with MOBE and the NGO Young Love with the ultimate objective of improving the quality of education in Botswana. During testing, the TARL approach consistently demonstrated improvements in numeracy skills. Students reaching the highest level of numeracy for their level increased from 2 per cent to 49 per cent at the end of the intervention. Recognising the success of this relatively simple way to improve remediation methods, the Government is keen to scale up the TARL model nationally in 2020. The effort to do so will form part of the development of a national remediation and enrichment programme, which UNICEF will undertake in 2020. The process of development will incorporate lessons learned not only from the testing of TARL but from other tried and tested remediation efforts by the Government itself, as well as other partners.

An Early Moments Matter (EMM) Campaign was launched with three custodian ministries, aimed at increasing public and political engagement for ECD. The campaign was officially launched by the Vice President of Botswana who made a public commitment to increase financial investment in ECD. The nationwide campaign prompted engagement of members of the UNICEF-initiated CEO Council for Children's Rights, parliamentarians, caregivers and public figures, creating awareness of the importance of the first 1,000 days of life. The campaign has reached over 117,000 people through social media, public spot announcements, public forums and commemoration of child health days in the 27 health districts across the country. The campaign will continue into 2020 with dedicated social media messaging and community level social and behaviour change communication.

Increased maternity leave, introduction of paternity leave, introduction of a lactation room and establishment of a day-care centre are among measures taken by several companies

to improve family friendly workplace policies. This resulted from UNICEF's continued effort to promote ECD through the CEO Council for Children's Rights, a UNICEF-established council with 15 members. Given the size and employment reach of these companies, it is foreseeable that this will positively affect several thousand children.

Community based integrated ECD continued to be tested, targeting caregivers, parents and ECD teachers to improve access to, and quality of, ECD. Reaching 400 children and 500 caregivers in 17 settlements in 3 districts, the programme aims to equip parents with positive caregiving practices through proper nutrition (infant and young child feeding), stimulation and protection from harm. The integrated model is well received by the programme recipients and the Government officers responsible for implementing ECD. Caregiver behaviour is positively evolving with consistent attendance at caregiver sessions, sharing their lessons learnt and anecdotal evidence of improved parenting practices. The programme also focuses on capacity development of ECD teachers through targeted training and follow-up support during the school term, ensuring that the teachers have the capacity to deliver play-centred ECD learning. Testing of the community integrated ECD approach has laid the foundation for Government to take to scale.

An ECD costed implementation plan was developed in 2019, following the endorsement of the ECD Policy Framework in 2018. The costed implementation plan constitutes a budget planning tool and a results framework to be used by Government in implementing a phased approach to increased ECD access.

Recognising the challenge of data availability, UNICEF collaborated with the Ministry of Basic Education (MOBE), Ministry of Health and Wellness (MOHW) and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD) to conduct an ECD baseline study in four priority districts. The study provided up to date data on the availability of ECD services in the study area, presented a monitoring and evaluation framework on ECD services and set relevant indicators for monitoring and evaluation of ECD programmes at all levels. The findings will be instrumental in informing the future programming for ECD in the country.

UNICEF supported the development of the Out of School Education (OSEC) facilitators manual, following development of the OSEC Policy, Curriculum, Teacher and Learner materials in 2018. The manual will be an important tool used in delivering the programme, roll out of which will start in 2020 in 50 per cent of OSEC centres, reaching an estimated 1,500

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children in 20 centres. The national implementation of the OSEC curriculum will be instrumental in reaching children not attending mainstream schools, particularly those in very remote areas. The manual developed with UNICEF support was used in a Training of Trainers for 43 instructors in 2019. An additional 50 instructors will be trained in 2020.

A mapping and capacity assessment of the Social Service Workforce to prevent and respond to Violence Against Children was commissioned in 2019. The initiative will ascertain the capacity of key frontline workers, especially social workers, in managing prevention and response to sexual, physical and emotional abuse of children in Botswana. Ultimately, the analysis will inform the next step of professionalising the social service workforce, strengthening their capacity regarding violence against children. The professionalization exercise, which will be undertaken by UNICEF in 2020, will incorporate a Social Service Toolkit that was developed by UNICEF for the Government of Botswana in 2018. The professionalization of social workers will eventually be complemented by efforts to promote positive parenting through the social service workforce, as well as communities. The basis

for this will be the adoption and/or adaptation of positive parenting models from the region, the mapping of which was undertaken in 2018.

The Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) Campaign, dubbed “E Seng Mo Ngwaneng” launched at the end of 2018 continued into 2019. The campaign achieved significant reach through social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter), radio and community outreach and generated public condemnation of SEA by public figures, including community leaders, government officials, CEOs and civil society. Community dialogues that took place across the country, not least by the First Lady of Botswana herself, promoted open discussions on SEA and anecdotal evidence shows that the campaign contributed to the increase of reported cases to the police. Collaborating with NGOs (for community outreach) and the Private Sector (for engagement with staff and caregivers) contributed to the reach of 117,000 people. Overall, the Campaign has opened people up to talking about SEA: some parents are more willing and comfortable to have conversations with their children on SEA and community leaders are taking a bold step to have conversations on this in their communities.

UNICEF produced a third series of Budget Briefs in 2019, developing briefs on national trends, education, health, HIV/AIDS and social protection. The briefs present financial analysis on allocation and expenditure within respective sectors and support budget decisions within and for sectors. The HIV/AIDS brief was the first for Botswana and was developed on request by the National AIDS and Health Promotion Agency in their efforts to present issues affecting sustainability of HIV/AIDS programmes in Botswana. In 2020, UNICEF will explore ways to further develop demand-driven briefs to influence public finance processes and decisions in favour of children. For example, Maternal and Child Health or Nutrition will be a focus of 2020’s health budget brief. In 2020, UNICEF will continue to promote broader access to budget information through the budget briefs, by engaging other stakeholders in budget dialogue, including child rights institutions, local government authorities and citizen groups.

The MTR of Botswana’s 11th national development plan (NDP11) incorporated several recommendations by UNICEF. In 2019, UNICEF consistently advocated for a Child Support Grant (CSG) that will address inadequate attention to the first 1,000 days of life. The MTR recommends design and piloting of the CSG in the second half of the NDP. Joint UNICEF and World Bank advocacy during the NDP11/MTR consultations resulted in a Government commitment to endorse and implement the National Social Protection Framework. UNICEF’s contribution to the draft Macroeconomic Outline and Performance Review influenced government commitment to increasing allocation for early childhood education, improving the efficiency of health spending, as well as achieving improved social protection outcomes by moving resources from less effective to more effective programmes.

Lessons Learned and Innovations

UNICEF has identified three key lessons in 2019.

Need to refocus efforts away from community-level interventions towards systems strengthening:

In 2019 UNICEF continued to work with local NGOs to test specific proof of concepts. Due to the small size and limited capacity of NGOs in Botswana, a significant amount of time had to be invested in supporting implementation of community-based work. Furthermore, extensive programme and financial assurance activities had to be undertaken to ensure proper implementation and accountability. This called into question, internally, UNICEF’s capacity to successfully implement community level interventions in an extremely resource constrained operating environment.

Further to the above and from an internal UNICEF Botswana review and Government consultations, it was concluded that UNICEF had exhausted its role in testing/implementing integrated Early Childhood Development (iECD) models at community level (an initiative introduced in 2017 as part of the new country programme direction to undertake community level work). UNICEF and respective ministries agreed that it is time for UNICEF to phase out of the piloting and for

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Government to take the lead, continuing to build the foundation for scale. The 18-month piloting has demonstrated positive results that will inform Government's decisions on, and design of, community-led iECD. The baseline assessment (undertaken in 4 districts in 2019) and development of iECD materials are also important resources to inform and facilitate ECD efforts in communities. A jointly developed exit strategy for the community ECD work is in place and UNICEF will phase out of this work by mid-2020.

Similarly, UNICEF's role in the successful piloting of TARL has come to a natural conclusion. Lessons from the 12-month implementation of TARL will be incorporated into the development of a national remediation and enrichment programme which UNICEF will lead.

While phasing out of community level work is not a blanket approach, and is dependent on specific programme resources, UNICEF in Botswana has determined that its value add remains playing a technical advisory function to systems strengthening through policy, strategy and programme planning and design, as well as support to evidence generation. Ongoing piloting of models, for example within the Adolescent and HIV programme, through engagement of a more capacitated NGO will continue for the time being, given resource availability. Re-focusing UNICEF's role in Botswana will enable optimal impact using the limited budget that the country office has on technical expertise.

In the spirit of renewed focus on systems strengthening, Child Protection programming has also changed course in 2019. Unable to generate significant impact with small interventions and having already developed a Birth Registration Bottleneck Analysis to support Government's programming decisions, UNICEF decided to move away from direct support to birth registration to instead providing more of a facilitative role. For instance, by identifying the opportunity to use the newly developed NIS in the DHIS2 to increase birth registration. UNICEF will continue to encourage interoperability between the MOHW and the Ministry of Nationality, Immigration and Gender Affairs, for efficiency gains.

UNICEF's direct interventions have – as reflected in earlier narrative – instead focused on strengthening systems to prevent and respond to violence against children. Complementing social service workforce strengthening, UNICEF intends to advocate for, and offer technical non-financial support to, the Government to strengthen referral procedures/SOPs for existing community structures such as Child Protection Committees and to support the design of Child Friendly Police Stations, with a police force equipped and skilled to address violence against children. UNICEF will also pursue an opportunity to collaborate with UNDP in 2020, leveraging their existing programme interventions to support legal support for child victims and to strengthen the justice system to handle children's cases.

Need to capitalize on T4D, where possible, for extended reach:

UNICEF Botswana increasingly sees its role as supporting the Government on innovative approaches to address the wellbeing needs of children. This includes technology for development (T4D). 2019 saw an intensification of efforts to use alternative approaches to reach adolescents when it comes to HIV. UNICEF was able to scale up its delivery of HIV prevention, treatment and care initiatives by engaging media, mobile network providers and digi-tech companies. The ability to reach almost 200,000 young people through a radio serial drama using not only radio but also mobile applications, and reaching 20,000 youth by using U-Report, demonstrated the importance of technology to effectively engage adolescents and young people in matters of concern to them. By using digital platforms and technology, it is possible to deliver at scale, the right interventions for young people, at the right time, and using the right approaches to improve programme efficiency and equity and delivery of results. UNICEF will apply this lesson in programme design going forward. This notwithstanding, piloting U-Report alone had generated considerable demand which UNICEF Botswana Country Office must find a way to meet, despite its meagre resources.

Need to reestablish UNICEF's convenor role amongst like-minded actors:

The Government's capacity to coordinate actors and stakeholders in the social sector sphere continues to be limited. This has risked duplication of efforts. Therefore, in 2020, UNICEF will build on foregoing efforts to create a collaboration and coordination space within and across sectors, fostering a space to share information, identify bottlenecks and gaps, formulate solutions and converge around advocacy messages. This will strengthen UNICEF's natural convenor role.